

Legislation written by U.S. Rep. Jo Ann Emerson (MO-08) was included in a bill to address the drought emergency throughout the country which was approved in the House of Representatives today by a vote of 223-197. Emerson, who authored a major portion of the bill, was responsible for sections that renewed three crucial livestock disaster assistance programs which had been allowed to expire on October 1, 2011.

"American farmers and ranchers are on the ropes right now, and this legislation is desperately needed," Emerson said during debate on the bill this morning. "These programs are a safety net for livestock producers in free-fall. They need this assistance – and we need to get it to them or else risk losing the heart and soul of the agricultural backbone of our nation, the families who literally put food on our tables."

Emerson said conditions are extremely severe in Southern Missouri, where several counties have been placed in the highest category of drought emergency.

"The costs of livestock feed have soared while the price of milk has stayed the same and the sale barns for cattle are at maximum capacity. Market conditions are very bad for livestock producers. This is exactly the kind of emergency for which these programs were intended," Emerson said.

She also noted that the bipartisan vote in favor of the bill reflected the commitment of both parties to preserve the emergency programs.

"When we come together for commonsense purposes, we can do some good for an agricultural system that serves the American people extremely well. We are home to the safest, most abundant, most affordable supply of food in the world, and it takes strong and supportive agricultural policies to keep us where we want to be. Members of both parties recognize that an emergency of this magnitude requires us to set politics aside," Emerson said. "I'm very grateful for the leadership of Agriculture Committee Chairman Frank Lucas and Ranking Member Collin Peterson on this important legislation."